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THE
BEAUTY OF HOLINESS.

A
SERMON.



THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS.

A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED IN THE

Parish Church of SWINDERBY, in the
County of LINCOLN.

On SUNDAY, APRIL 18, 1773.

BEING THE

First Day of opening the Church after New Seating it,
by the Voluntary Subscription of some of the FREE-
HOLDERS and Others.

By JOHN DISNEY, LL.B.

Vicar of SWINDERBY.

L O N D O N,

Printed for J. JOHNSON, No. 72, St. Paul's Church Yard;

MDCCCLXXIII.

THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS

S E R M O N

PREACHED IN THE
Parish Church of Swinburn, in the
County of Lincoln.



On Sunday, the 10th of July, 1773.
By the Rev. John Dicker, Minister of the Parish.
LONDON: Printed by J. D. Newbery, in Pall-mall.

By JOHN DICKER, Esq.

Minister of Swinburn.

LONDON: Printed by J. D. Newbery, in Pall-mall.
1773.

TO THE
PARISHIONERS

OF

SWINDERBY,

AND TO THE

BENEFACTORS

Towards New Seating of the Church there,

THE FOLLOWING

S E R M O N,

IS DEDICATED,

By their faithful Pastor,

and obliged Servant,

Swinderby,
May 6, 1773.

J. D.



Pſalm xcvi. part of the 9th Verſe.

*O worſhip the Lord in the Beauty of
Holineſs.*

THE lively and ſpirited exhortations which holy David pours forth, in the pſalm before us, to worſhip and adore our God and Father, not only command the attention, but convince the judgment. For beſides the eloquence of his language, there is argument even in his exhortations. He places the one true God, the Lord Jehovah, as the object of adoration; and it was becauſe of his uniform worſhip of this one only true inviſible God, in oppoſition
to

to the polytheism, or multitude of gods, acknowledged in the East, that the Royal Psalmist was himself called, *the man after God's own heart*. Our divine poet goes on, and invites *all the whole earth to sing unto him, to praise his name, to declare his honour, and his wonders to the heathen, and to all people*. He admirably describes the infinite and unmeasurable distance between the creature and the Creator, and the superiority of Jehovah to the gods of the heathen, by declaring, that *he is great, and cannot worthily be praised; that he is more to be feared than all gods. He it is that made the heavens: Glory and worship are before him; power and honour are in his sanctuary*. The same holy man seconds his invitation to worship this great, this good, this only God, by pointing out to us the way. *Ascribe, says he, O ye kindreds of the people, ascribe unto the Lord, worship and power; ascribe unto the Lord the honour due unto his name. Bring presents,*
that

that is, an humble and contrite heart, the only offering, or sacrifice which he will accept, *and come into his courts*, or in other words, come and continue in his more immediate presence.—*O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness*.—This audience need not be told the occasion of my making choice of this text for my subject; and I conceive the present to be no unfavourable opportunity of explaining so important a passage in our Bible.

To worship the Lord, is a duty acknowledged by the Jew, and the unbeliever, as well as the Christian. It may therefore seem needless to dwell upon any proofs; but of such great importance is this command, that there is no passing by so plain, and acknowledged a truth, without noticing it more particularly.—The light of nature directs us to a First Cause or Author of every thing, of our creation,

preservation, and all the blessings of this life.—Indeed all the *rational* part of the creation acknowledge, and every part of the works of creation proves it. It is an immutable truth therefore, that there is a God. He it was, that created the heavens out of nothing ; that said, Let the earth be, and the earth was ; that said, Let us make man in our image, and man was created. And as our first coming into life proves him our Creator, so our continuance in life, proves him our Protector. The blessings which we daily and hourly receive from him, make him deservedly to be considered as our Benefactor ; and the future world which he has provided for us, and made known to us by his son Jesus Christ, demonstrates him our best and greatest Friend.

Thus much may suffice for reminding you, for I must presume that you knew it before ;

before ; thus much, I say, may serve for reminding you, who it is that is our God, and of the necessity of giving worship unto him, and unto him only, who is the Lord of life and death. It is now to be explained to you what we may understand the Psalmist to mean by worshiping him in the Beauty of Holiness. And to effect this, I will distinctly consider, what and how much it imports in it's literal, before I engage with its figurative or spiritual sense.

In it's literal sense, we may consider it to mean the decent appearance of the *place* set apart for public worship, or consecrated to the peculiar service of the Almighty, and therefore emphatically and properly called the HOUSE OF GOD. And as this place, in which we meet together to offer up our common prayers and praises, has been lately put into a clean, decent, and orderly condition ; as we have not adorned it with the

gaudy decorations of Popish churches, nor the superb ornaments of costly pride, so may it continue. Be it our business not to please the eye, but to reform the heart; to meet together, not as triflers to gaze on the works of art, to commend the outward beauty of the edifice, but, as servants of God, to meditate on the awful presence of that pure spirit, who requires his worshippers to worship him in spirit and in truth; to recollect that we are not in the house of feasting, but that we are standing before him, who has declared that he will *look upon him only, who is of a poor and contrite spirit, and that trembleth at his word.*—Much has been done in this good and laudable work; little, by us, remains further to be done.—May others in this country follow our example; may they, like us, be willing and ready to support that house where the Almighty deigneth to dwell, and to preserve
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the sanctuary of the Lord, elegantly plain. The heathens spared no pains to adorn the temples of those, that were no gods ; but Christians will do little to preserve from falling to the ground the temple of the living Lord.—The little out-goings for the support of decency and conveniency in our churches, should in some measure be considered as an offering to God, as well as a credit to ourselves. And now we ourselves have gone through a reasonable part of this work, let me ask, do we not express both our pleasure and our satisfaction at the completion of what we all along knew to be right, proper, and necessary ?—Nay, have we not a commendable pride in the progress we have made in the reparation of this church ? I appeal to former works which we have done, and in which each bore a share, and not to the last necessary improvement, which we owe to the generous contributions

tions of others.—We now look upon the whole with pleasure : and when our children in time to come shall say, What meant they by these things? the answer will be, These are the deeds of those, whose earnest desire it was to *worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness*.—But it is time to consider what it is to worship the Lord in the BEAUTY OF HOLINESS, in its most important, that is, its *spiritual* sense.

Here we must, once for all, call to mind, that *God is a spirit*, and that *he must be worshipped in spirit and in truth*, that is, he must be worshipped with the mind in sincerity. To address him with our lips, while our hearts are far from him, is the most daring impiety ; for, at the same time that it proves our knowledge of his power, it proves also our contempt of his authority. Such hypocrisy we dare not use
towards

towards men, in matters which are open to their eyes; and shall we vainly imagine that that Lord doth not perceive, *to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid?*

From good authority we are told, that, *not every one that saith Lord! Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of our Father which is in heaven.* No, it cannot be the overflowing of the tongue, that shall be judged an acceptable sacrifice in the sight of God. What tho' we chant forth our hallelujahs in this his temple, will he regard us, if we attend to the sound, and lose the sense; if we study only the harmony of the voice, of the tabret, or the harp, but accompany them not with the fervor of devotion? Neither is this all. For if we come to this the place of our worship, and flatter

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ter ourselves when we go hence, that our religious exercises will be approved,—it must be remembered, that to render it effectual, we must let it have its influence on our conduct and deportment, by an habit of serious attention to the duties of the sabbath. And as custom is a second nature, it greatly behooveth the parent, and the master to see and attend to the proper employment of the sabbath by his children and family. Young minds are like tender branches, they may be directed as the hand of the governor or husbandman willeth; and yet how often do we see, or hear of these parts of families, (who are under the authority of a parent or master) mispending the Lord's day. The young ones engaged in play, and the elder ones think themselves at least innocently employed, if the day be devoted to indolence and inattention. They may indeed occasionally boast of coming to church, and
tho'

tho' we cannot deny the fact, we may reasonably suspect the motive. How backward are men in the discharge of the easiest of religious duties! when, if they would taste oftener, they would soon gain a relish for them; for the pleasures of sin are but for a moment, while the pleasures of virtue and holiness are not only satisfactory, but durable unto life eternal.—We should also note, that acts of piety on our sabbath, will not cancel acts of knavery, or the commission of vice on the succeeding day,—but the reverse; for if our lives pass on, in our intercourses with each other, in opposition to the law of God,—our acts of devotion are nothing better than so many multiplied acts of hypocrisy,—a sin the most displeasing and offensive before Almighty God.

The worshiping the Lord in the
Beauty of Holiness, extendeth also to private
C prayer,

prayer, a duty as strictly enjoined as that of public: and I conceive *family* prayer to be particularly edifying. How pleasing a sight to see this duty regularly and decently conducted, where all parts of the household, who pass together thro' life's busy day, in their several stations and departments, meet together, before they close their eyes to sleep, to return thanks, pour forth their praises, and beg a blessing upon them, and theirs, of that God who has been their Creator, and is their governor and friend.

In a few words: the *true Spirit of Holiness*, will direct men to frequent intercourses with the Almighty, and the *Beauty of Holiness*, consisteth in that intercourse being made a reasonable service, deserving the attention of that power to whom it is addressed, and becoming man whom reason and revelation direct to fall down before him.

Let

Let the whole earth stand in awe of him, (as the same psalm expresses it) tell it among the heathen that the Lord is King, and that it is he who hath made the round world so fast, that it cannot be moved; and how that he shall judge the people righteously. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad, let the sea make a noise and all that therein is. Let the field be joyful, and all that is in it: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord. For he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth, and with righteousness to judge the world, and the people with truth. But, as God seeth not, as man seeth, it is not the formalities of worship, nor a frequent or Pharisaical repetition, that of themselves are judged acceptable; for, if the tongue speaketh not the language of the heart, how shall we expect our petitions to be heard? God judgeth from the secret springs of the heart and not from the

outward appearance, which is the only test or criterion of judgment with our fellow-creatures. To worship the Lord in spirit, is to worship him with the understanding; to worship him in truth, is to worship him with sincerity. After having so far discharged a positive command, to carry with us the good impressions of this holy exercise, out of the walls of the temple, into the concerns of life, is strictly and in the best sense *to worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness.*

As we have laboured, I trust, from a good principle to make our place of public meeting, becoming our errand and business here; we have nothing left for the present, but to make a good and wise use of these necessary improvements. And as, in its present situation, it is now rendered commodious, we should endeavour

vour to habituate ourselves to the more important duty of a regular attendance on the public service of God, and to stir up and nourish within ourselves a proper seriousness and devotion, remembering who it is that hath promised, that *where two or three are gathered together in his name, he will be in the midst of them.*

Let us now, my brethren, pray that we may be blessed from heaven with the divine spirit of the Lord of Lords, to assist and direct us in worshiping and adoring that same Lord God Almighty, to whom we owe such great and infinite obligations, in spirit and in truth, and in the Beauty of Holiness; that the prayers which we may here offer up to his Divine Majesty may be duly heard; and that at all times we may return from such oblations of prayers and praises, improved and edified, and be thereby rendered meet partakers of the kingdom of Heaven.

Now

(18)

Now to Him that is of power to
establiſh you according to the goſpel
and preaching of Jeſus Chriſt ;
to God only wiſe be glory, through
Jeſus Chriſt for ever.

Amen.

F I N I S.

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